

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

USIA-15 AID-20 EB-11 CIEP-02 TRSE-00 STR-08 OMB-01

CEA-02 COME-00 FRB-02 XMB-07 OPIC-12 LAB-06 SIL-01

HEW-08 DRC-01 /181 W

----- 115218

R 301727Z APR 74

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9924

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

USMISSION OECD PARIS

AMCONSUL HAMBURG

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 05311

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, UK, PINT, SOCI

SUBJECT: THE NEXT ELECTION: A LABOR LEADER'S VIEW

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: BARBARA CASTLE, SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR SOCIAL SERVICES, FORESEES THAT THE EARLIEST POSSIBLE
OPPORTUNITY FOR THE LABOR GOVERNMENT TO GO TO THE COUNTRY
WOULD BE IN OCTOBER. END SUMMARTQ

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2. MRS. CASTLE TOLD A SMALL GROUP OF LABOR ATTACHES

(FROM CANADA, FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY, AND EMBASSY)
THAT THE GOVERNMENT "OWED IT TO THE TRADE UNIONS TO
OBTAIN A REPEAL OF THE INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS ACT," LONG-
SOUGHT BY THE BRITISH TUC. SHE SAW LITTLE LIKELIHOOD
THAT THE ACT COULD BE PASSED BEFORE MID-JUNE, BY WHICH
TIME IT WOULD BE TOO LATE TO PREPARE FOR AN ELECTION
ANY EARLIER THAN OCTOBER.

3. SHE SAID THAT ALTHOUGH IT WOULD BE NECESSARY FOR THE
GOVERNMENT TO GIVE WAY TO THE OPPOSITION ON SOME
CONTROVERSIAL ASPECTS OF THE INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS ACT,
SUCH AS RESTRICTIONS ON PICKETING, WHICH THE OPPOSITION
WISHES TO RETAIN, THE DEBATE ON THE LAW WILL BE PRO-
TRACTED AS LONG AS POSSIBLE BY THE CONSERVATIVES. IN
THE END, SHE SAID, THE OPPOSITION WILL HAVE TO GIVE WAY
BUT WILL HAVE GAINED ENOUGH TIME TO PREVENT AN EARLY
ELECTION.

4. MRS. CASTLE DEMONSTRATED CONSIDERABLE EBULLIENCE
OVER LABOR'S CHANCES NEXT FALL. SHE ACCEPTED THE FACT
THAT PRICE RISES AND BALANCE OF PAYMENTS DEFICITS
WOULD AFFECT THE LABOR PARTY TO SOME EXTENT BUT SHE
DISCOUNTS THESE FACTORS AS BEING OF REAL SIGNIFICANCE.
SHE IS CONFIDENT THAT THE LABOR PARTY WILL WIN A
MAJORITY IN THE NEXT ELECTION BUT WAS CAUTIOUS ABOUT
ITS SIZE. SHE SAID, "THE PEOPLE ARE WITH US OVER WHAT
WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO ACHIEVE IN TERMS OF OUR PROMISES
IN THE PRE-ELECTION PERIOD."

5. SHE BELIEVES THAT THE COMMON MARKET ISSUE WILL BE
PLACED BEFORE THE VOTERS IN THE NEXT ELECTION AND WILL
BE SEIZED UPON AS A VERY POPULAR ISSUE. SHE SAID
CALLAGHAN "WAS VERY NERVOUS ABOUT SHARP PRESS REACTION
IN BRITAIN TO HIS TOUGH STATEMENTS IN BRUSSELS DURING
THE LAST FOREIGN MINISTERS' MEETING," BUT THAT HIS
TOUGH STAND MADE HIM MUCH MORE POPULAR WITHIN THE
LABOR PARTY AND IN THE GENERAL LABOR CONSTITUENCY.
SHE WAS NOT AT ALL CLEAR, HOWEVER, AS TO HOW THE GOVERN-

MENT WILL PRESENT THIS ISSUE TO THE ELECTORATE.

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6. IN A SHORT POST-MORTEM ON THE LAST ELECTION SHE
BLAMED THE CONSERVATIVES' LOSS PRIMARILY ON "HEATH'S
STUBBORNNESS." SHE SAID THERE WERE NUMEROUS OPPORTUNITIES
FOR THE HEATH GOVERNMENT TO IMPROVE THEIR ELECTION
CHANCES: A) BY PROVIDING A MORE "SOCIAL" BUDGET
LAST DECEMBER, AND B) BY TAKING THE OPPORTUNITY
OFFERED ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS TO RESOLVE THE MINERS'
DISPUTE. SHE OPINED THAT WILLIE WHITEHEAD BASICALLY
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SHARED HER VIEW AND WAS HIMSELF TAKEN ABACK BY THE HEATH GOVERNMENT'S FAILURE TO TAKE UP ONE OF THE OPTIONS FOR SETTLING THE MINERS' DISPUTE. MRS. CASTLE ADDED HER VIEW THAT HEATH IS A LIABILITY TO THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY, B UT THAT THE PARTY IS STUCK WITH HIM AND CANNOT DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT.

7. MRS. CASTLE WAS VERY SANGUINE ABOUT THE SUCCESS OF THE "SOCIAL CONTRACT". SHE CLAIMED THAT THERE WAS "A TRUE MARRIAGE BETWEEN THE TRADE UNIONS AND THE LABOR PARTY." "WE UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER," SHE SAID, AND SHE ADDED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD PROFIT FROM THE MISTAKES IT MADE IN DEALING WITH THE TUC WHEN IT WAS LAST IN POWER. SHE SAID THAT SHE WAS AMAZED THAT HUGH SCANLON, THE LEFT-WING LEADER OF THE GIANT AMALGAMATED UNION OF ENGINEERING WORKERS, HAD ALSO ACCEPTED THE "CONTRACT," A FACT WHICH SHE BELIEVES WOULD ENSURE ITS SUCCESS.

8. THE SECRETARY, WHO WAS ACCOMPANIED BY MINISTER OF STATE FOR SOCIAL SERVICES, BRIAN O'MALLEY, INDICATED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WILL UNVEIL NEXT WEEK FAR-REACHING PROPOSALS IN THE SOCIAL WELFARE AREA, WHICH WOULD CARRY ONE STEP FURTHER THE LABOR PARTY'S PROMISES DURING THE CAMPAIGN.

9. MRS. CASTLE ALSO NOTED THAT SHE WAS DEBATING THE ACCEPTANCE OF AN INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN THE MEETING OF THE AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION, SCHEDULED FOR AUGUST IN HAWAII. HER DECISION WOULD DEPEND, SHE SAID, ON DEVELOPMENTS DURING THE NEXT SEVERAL MONTHS.

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